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ABSTRACT

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COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATION
STIRLING, SCOTLAND, JUNE 25-JULY 1, 1978

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It outlines how these programs are provided by one area board of education on behalf of the other area boards and are available free of charge to any of the 356,000 students in Metro upon the recommendation of an Admission Board and the consent of the parents.

It deals briefly with the co-operative way these programs are monitored and plans made for the future.

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Planning for the Individual Needs of Exceptional Learners in a FastGrowing Metropolitan Community -

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Twenty-five years ago, the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto was composed of thirteen separate municipalities, with twenty-seven independent operating school boards. The kind of educational opportunity available to students varied widely amongst the boards as did the tax rate levied to provide these opportunities. A report enacted by the provincial government* in 1953 produced eleven municipalities, each with a coterminous board of education, and a Metropolitan Toronto School Board (MTSB) which, essentially, had responsibilities in the areas of finance and the capital building program.

Although this arrangement went some distance towards correcting some of the educational and fiscal inequities, it did not resolve all of them, and, as a result, in the early 1960's a Royal Commission was established which eventually resulted in the provincial government in 1967 enacting further changes which produced one city and five boroughs, each with its own coterminous board of education (see Appendix "A"). The role of the MTSB was strengthened and a uniform mill rate for educational purposes was introduced which resulted in taxpayers in each of the six municipalities paying approximately the same tax rate for educational purposes. All monies from this uniform tax rate and grants from the provincial government come to the MTSB and are then distributed amongst the various area boards using a quite complex series of budget formulae.

The six area boards in Metro Toronto currently (1978) have a total enrolment of 356,000 and a total composite current budget of 785 million dollars**. This money is provided 22% from provincial grants, plus 78% by a mill rate levied uniformly upon the taxpayers of all six area municipalities. I work for the second largest of these, the Toronto Board of Education, which is an inner-city school system with 140 schools, 90,000 students, and a 1978 budget of $200 million. In addition to these six boards, there is a publicly supported (to the end of Grade 10)

* In Canada, education is a provincial (state) responsibility with no direct federal involvement.
** 785 million dollars (Canadian)= 707 million dollars (US)= 387 million pounds (UK)

Metropolitan Separate School Board which is open to the children of Roman Catholic taxpayers who direct their property taxes to that system. The Metropolitan Separate School Board covers all six area municipalities and serves about 95,000 pupils.

One of the most jealously guarded prerogatives of the six area boards is their position that while the MTSB distributes the funds and allocates the number of teachers, the way in which these funds will be spent, the way in which these teachers will be used and the programs that will be provided, will be decided by each area board based on its perception of the needs of its students. The one exception to this is the provision of metro-wide special education services, i.e., programs in the areas of hearing, vision, aphasia, orthopaedic and other health related disabilities, and programs in hospitals and institutions.

Naturally enough, the forerunners of metro-wide programs started in the City before the turn of the century when the present suburbs were almost totally forests or farmlands. In 1896, the Toronto Board of Education started a class at the Hospital for Sick Children, a large, internationally known hospital serving the needs of young people from birth to age 18 years. As the years progressed, the Toronto Board added more and more programs which have become, in the last twenty-five years, programs available on a metro-wide basis to all students of the other area boards, available since 1967 at no charge to non-city students. The historical chronology of these programs is shown in Appendix "B", with each development related to metro-wide programs identified with an asterisk (*).

Special Program (Deaf) - 61 Teachers, 326 Students*
Toronto's first classes for elementary school-age children (Kindergarten-Grade 8) with hearing disabilities were opened in 1924. These were offered at that time as alternatives to placement in provincial residential schools for the deaf.

Over the years since then, the program has expanded to cover children from age three to the end of secondary school (Grades 9-13), according to the following timeline:
1947 - Pre-school classes.
1957 - Programs at the secondary school level.

* All statistics as of September 30, 1977.

1962 - Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf opened in a new building specially designed to serve the needs of deaf children from pre-school to the end of elementary school. It is located on the same site and joined to a regular elementary school in which additional teachers are provided to promote integration.

1967 - A special experimental verbotonal program for the deaf using the principles of Professor Guberina of Yugoslavia was initiated in response to a proposal from a group of parents. This program was operated for approximately five years at which time the children remaining in the program joined other special programs.

1970 - From 1970 on, the program expanded into schools operated by two of the other area boards of education. Day-to-day operation and supervision is provided by these boards while program support is provided by the Toronto Board.

1973 - A group of three classes was transferred from the Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf to a regular elementary school, with the students being chosen from amongst those who were most oral.

1974 - An infant program involving mothers and their pre-school children was started at the Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf.

1975 - Total communication classes where the language of signs and finger spelling are taught as adjuncts to the aural/oral approach were established to help meet needs which were not being met adequately by the aural/oral approach alone.

1976 - Radio frequency hearing equipment (phonic ear) was provided to help maintain hearing impaired students in their regular classrooms. These students are further supported by regular visits from itinerant teachers.

The Metropolitan Toronto area provides the only full-range (pre-school to end of secondary school) programs for the hearing impaired operated by a Canadian school system. Every teacher in programs for the deaf is fully trained as a specialist teacher of the deaf. This has been achieved over the years mainly by selecting high calibre regular classroom teachers and sending them for a year's training on full salary. Program support is provided by a co-ordinator who is on the staff of the Toronto Board but who works with programs located in two other area boards as well. Although residence of the pupil is considered, specific program placement is decided according to the needs of the individual student.

Special Program (Hearing) - 25 Teachers, 276 Students

These classes are designed for hearing impaired students in Metropolitan Toronto whose hearing losses fall in the moderate to severe range and whose educational needs cannot be met in the regular classroom setting. Again, emphasis is placed on language development and speech training in classrooms which are acoustically treated and are equipped with group and individual hearing aids to provide maximum benefit from sound amplification.

In 1924, this program was part of a joint program for the deaf and hard of hearing and its expansion throughout the school system followed that of the program for the deaf, with one very important difference. In 1969, an itinerant program was established to assist students who have a significant hearing loss but who are able to remain in regular school classes with the help of an itinerant teacher. Students may be withdrawn from regular classes for two or three sessions each week focussing on auditory training, language and speech. Close contact is maintained with parents, regular class teacher and the principal, and progress is evaluated regularly on an on-going basis. In this program, as well, radio frequency hearing equipment has been provided since 1976.

Classes are currently located in five of the six area boards of education with program support again being provided by Toronto Board staff.

Special Program (Language) - 17 Teachers, 97 Students

This program is designed to meet the needs of students who show a significant deficit in language development demonstrated by either failure in learning to speak or extreme difficulty in both understanding and expressing ideas through speech. The first class for students diagnosed as having aphasia was opened in 1955 in a regular elementary school.

As the program expanded over the years, classes were opened at the secondary level in 1967 and all of the elementary classes, eight in number, were gathered into a co-ordinated unit in a north-end elementary school. It became evident over the years that there was a significant overlap in the learning difficulties of some children who were being placed in special programs deaf, hearing and language. As a result, in 1973, the three programs were combined as Special Program (Communications) under

a single co-ordinator who also assumed responsibility for Special Program (Speech) in the City only. As a result of this more co-ordinated approach, a diagnostic centre with short-term placement was developed in 1975 and, in the same year, an itinerant program was begun. In 1977, a pilot program in total communication for non-verbal students who can hear was started with students originally diagnosed as being trainable retarded but who appear to have potential ability in the educable range, given the support of a facilitator for language. Signs and finger spelling are used with the usual communication modes to encourage language development.

Special Program (Vision) - 4 Teachers, 126 Students

In 1921, the Toronto Board established the first sight-saving classes in rooms equipped with special lighting, desks with tops that could be slanted and many learning materials printed with large size type. This program was designed to meet the needs of students where visual impairment was educationally handicapping. It has followed the pattern of many other special education programs with the development of resource rooms and an itinerant program to supplement the basic self-contained classes.

Where the visual impairment is sufficiently severe to result in the student being certified blind, placement would normally be in a residential provincial school for the blind. Since 1968, a number of blind students have returned from this school after learning Braille and other supportive skillsand have been integrated fully into regular classrooms. In 1977, an alternative to placement in the residential school was established. This provided for the support of blind children from the beginning of elementary school, including necessary training in Braille and mobility. From its outset, the program for blind children has been operated by the North York Board of Education, and, to provide for the most efficient form of program support, the Toronto Board is gradually phasing out its direct involvement in Special Program (Vision) which, within the next year, will result in North York providing co-ordination and support for the full range of services for pupils with visual impairment.

Special Program (Orthopaedic) - 54 Teachers, 381 Students

This program started with a single class in Toronto in 1926. It has grown until today it offers programs from junior kindergarten to the end of secondary school in a variety of locations throughout Metro Toronto. The program, as currently provided, is designed to serve students:

(a) who are in wheelchairs or walkers and require one-level classrooms, elevators and ramps.

(b) who require on-going physical, occupational and/or speech therapy.

(c) who require personal care and assistance provided by health care assistants.

(d) who require medical supervision or a full-time nurse during school hours.

Since these needs cannot all be met satisfactorily in regular school settings, it has been necessary to provide a number of modified environments with specialized facilities, equipment and support staff. The most widely known of these facilities, Sunny View School, was opened in 1953 to serve students from the beginning of elementary school through to the end of their time in school. Many of you will recognize this school from having seen parts of the Academy Award winning film, "I'll Find a Way", which told the story of Nadia DeFranco, a student at Sunny View.

As more and more of the students attending Sunny View become able to benefit by a secondary school program, secondary school units were started in 1974.

In addition to the programs located within schools, the Board also operates a school at Bloorview Hospital, which is a residential setting for students with more severe physical handicaps.

Again, this is the only full-scale program for the physically handicapped operated by any school system in Canada.

Special Program (Hospital and Institutional)

As mentioned earlier, the first program in a hospital or institutional setting in Metro was established in 1896 at the Hospital for Sick Children. This was the only such program in operation for nearly 70 years, but, during the past fifteen years, we have developed more than 40 programs in fifteen different locations. These include psychiatric hospitals, treatment centres, and a hospital for the treatment of cancer. Similar programs are operated in hospitals and institutions located in other parts of Metro Toronto, with each board administering its own programs although placement is based on need rather than residence.

Special Program (Health) - 8 Teachers, 78 Students

This program is designed for those students between the ages of six to twelve who require a protected school environment for health reasons. It provides educational facilities for students who otherwise might not be able to attend school and to help build up their physical tolerance so that they can return to their local school without a break in their school programs. They will have been recommended by the local Medical Officer of Health for one of the following reasons:

(a) Students who cannot attend regular school because of low physical tolerance and/or mobility problems.

(b) Students who are recuperating from or being prepared for surgery or long-term hospitalization.

(c) Students with medical conditions involving clinic and hospital appointments which seriously affect school attendance.

(d) Students who require diet supervision or rest time during the day.

These students are provided with a nutritious lunch and sleeping room facilities are available for those students who require rest and sleep periods. It is interesting to recall that this program was originally started in 1914 as an "open air forest school" for children who had been in contact with TB.

Special Program (Trainable) - 64 Teachers, 1246 Students

The one exception to metro-wide programs being operated by one of the area boards on behalf of all of the other area boards is the program for the trainable retarded. This is the only program operated by the MTSB and is offered in a number of special schools and in small classroom units integrated into regular area board schools. The program has been expanded rapidly in the past ten years and now offers a complete program for all children in the metro area who need this type of educational setting.

General Comments

1. Metro-wide programs are open to all residents of Metropolitan Toronto who are public school supporters without payment of any fee.

2. Students who are children of separate school supporters are eligible for the appropriate metro-wide program upon payment of a fee by the Metropolitan Separate School Board.

3. Where required, transportation is provided by the home board of the student involved, with the exception of Special Program (Trainable) where the MTSB provides all transportation.

4. There are no waiting lists for placement in metro-wide programs. Staffing and program support is provided on an 'as needed' basis. Most local board special education programs currently have waiting lists.
5. Specialized support services are provided for these programs, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and para-professionals.
6. Since a large portion of the students come from non-English speaking homes (in the City, approximately 50%), translation and interpreting services are available.
7. Recommendation for placement in these programs is made by Admission Boards composed of representatives of special education, the school, appropriate support services and attended by the parent(s) if they so wish. Placement is made only with the signed consent of the parent(s).

Directions for the future

General planning for the future of metro-wide special education programs is provided by a committee made up of representatives of each of the boards involved. In addition, there are specialized sub-committees dealing with such things as the programs for the hearing impaired and physically handicapped. These groups carry out a regular on-going review of all of the programs and propose changes which they feel are appropriate. For example, there will be three classes additional for the hearing impaired opened at the secondary level this Fall, one of which will provide a Total Communication Program for graduates of the elementary school Total Communication Program. There will also be, for the first time, a health class unit incorporated into a senior elementary school (Grades 7 and 8) for children who are able to benefit by the academic program at that level but who still need an on-going protected environment for occasional use.

Like many other jurisdictions across North America, Metropolitan Toronto is experiencing declining enrolment. In our case, this is caused primarily by a continuing steady decline in the birth rate and greatly decreased immigration. Declining enrolment, however, has not so far been reflected in a decline in the number of teachers involved in metro-wide special education programs for three very important reasons:

1. Since many of these programs are unique, either in Ontario or in Canada, families with children who need these programs and who are able to do so move to Metro Toronto to obtain placement in these programs. At one time

several years ago, nearly one-third of the children in the programs for the physically handicapped came from families who had moved to Toronto specifically to obtain this service.

2. Service in the programs is being modified constantly to meet the needs of children who are more involved. A good example of a chain reaction in this regard can be shown by looking at the change in service offered to students in the programs for the mentally retarded, i.e., many students who formerly were in residential institutions are now in day programs for the trainable. In turn, many students who were formerly in the trainable program are now in self-contained classes for the educable retarded, while, in turn, many students who were formerly in self-contained classes for the educable retarded are being supported by resource rooms, withdrawal programs, or itinerant teachers.

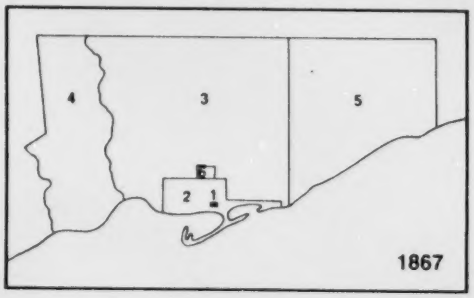
3. You will recognize that this ties in directly with the concept of main-streaming. One of the major difficulties with this concept is that many educators have looked upon it as logically producing reductions in cost. Our experience, on the other hand, has been that to provide the appropriate level of support frequently increases costs rather than reducing them. If a pupil is in a self-contained classroom, then the school system is providing only one "seat" for that pupil, whereas if he is mainstreamed the system is not only providing a "seat" in a regular classroom but is also providing at an add-on cost some kind of outside support.

At the present time, a new Royal Commission report is being debated, a report which proposes the abolition of the Metropolitan Toronto School Board. In spite of the widely varying positions taken by the area boards about this proposal, there is comparative unanimity that one of the successes of the metro arrangement has been the provision of metro-wide special education programs.

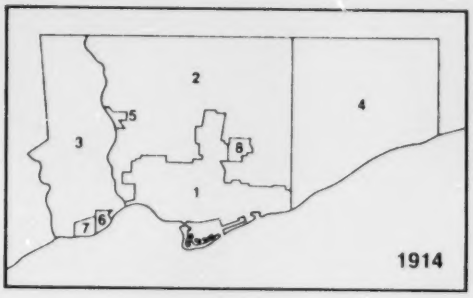
We are proud of the kind of service which we offer to exceptional children in the Metropolitan Toronto area and would invite any of you to come to see what we are doing.

APPENDIX "A"

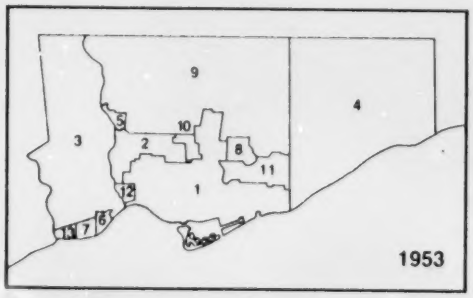
AREA MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES 1867-1967



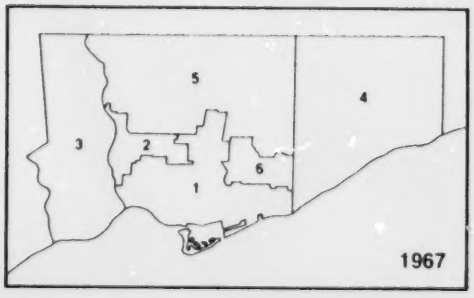
1 Original Townsite (1793)
2 City of Toronto (1834)
3 Township of York (1850)
4 Township of Etobicoke (1850)
5 Township of Scarborough (1850)
6 Village of Yorkville (1853)



1 City of Toronto
2 Township of York
3 Township of Etobicoke
4 Township of Scarborough
5 Village of Weston (1881)
6 Village of Mimico (1911)
7 Village of New Toronto (1913)
8 Town of Leaside (1913)



1 City of Toronto
2 Township of York
3 Township of Etobicoke
4 Township of Scarborough
5 Town of Weston
6 Town of Mimico
7 Town of New Toronto
8 Town of Leaside
9 Township of North York (1922)
10 Village of Forest Hill (1923)
11 Township of East York (1924)
12 Village of Swansea (1925)
13 Village of Long Branch (1930)



1 City of Toronto
2 Borough of York
3 Borough of Etobicoke
4 Borough of Scarborough
5 Borough of North York
6 Borough of East York

Development of Special Education Service

APPENDIX "B"

Year	Program	Current Status
1896	Class at Hospital for Sick Children	Special Program (Hosp. & Institutional)
1914	Forest School (High Park)	program discontinued
1916	Health Class	Special Program (Health)
1921	Sight Saving Class	Special Program (Vision)
1924	Classes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Special Programs (Deaf) and (Hearing)
1926	Orthopaedic Class	Special Program (Orthopaedic)
1953	Sunny View School (Orthopaedic)	presently functioning
1955	Aphasic Class	Special Program (Language)
1957	Class for Deaf at secondary school level	Special Program (Deaf and Hearing) Secondary Schools
1963	Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf	presently functioning
1965	Class at Clarke Institute of Psychiatry	Special Program (Hosp. & Institutional) Treatment Centres
1967	Aphasic Class at secondary school level	Special Program (Language) Secondary Sch.
1967	Verbotonal Program (Deaf)	program discontinued
1968	Blind children totally integrated	Special Program (Vision) Itinerant
1969	Itinerant Program for Hard of Hearing	Special Program (Hearing) Itinerant Teacher Service throughout Metro.Toronto
1969	Vision Program at secondary school level	program discontinued
1973	Special Program (Communications), encompassing Special Progs. (Deaf, Speech, Hearing and Language)	presently functioning
1974	Infant program at Metropolitan Toronto School for the Deaf	presently functioning
1974	Special Program (Orthopaedic) secondary school units	presently functioning
1974	Educational Assistants for Special Programs (Health) and (Orthopaedic)	presently functioning
1974	McCaul Street Public School and College Street Secondary School established to administer classes in hospitals and institutions	presently functioning
1974	Special Program (Hosp. & Institutional) Treatment Centre programs totally funded by Ministry of Education	presently functioning
1975	Diagnostic Educational Centre for Special Program (Language)	presently functioning
1975	Total Communication Program for deaf students	presently functioning
1975	Itinerant Program for Special Program (Language)	presently functioning
1975	New Bloorview School (Orthopaedic)	presently functioning
1976	Radio frequency hearing equipment provided to maintain hearing impaired students in regular classes	presently functioning
1977	Special Program (Language) Total Communication Program for hearing, non-verbal students	presently functioning